IRIS Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society
Institut de recherche et de développement sur l'intégration et la société

Towards an Understanding of Effective Practices in Employment Programs for People with Disabilities in Canada

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Overview

This is a review of Canadian best practices supporting the participation of persons with disabilities in the labour market. The objective of the research is to identify and analyze domestic best practices in programs, approaches or initiatives that support the participation of people with disabilities in the labour market. A related aim is to show how they can overcome barriers to labour market participation, thereby allowing governments to draw lessons from effective and successful employment programs for people with disabilities and develop policy options to optimize labour market outcomes for this group.

The tasks for the research were to:

- Review relevant reports and related literature on Canada;
- Examine through consultation with all provinces and territories their current labour market programs for people with disabilities, including a review of provincial documents and reports;
- Analyze existing evaluation findings relating to active labour market programming for people with disabilities; and,
- Identify and compare best practices that the various labour market stakeholders could potentially adopt.

The scope of programs includes employment programs, especially active labour market measures and tax measures related to people with disabilities' participation in the labour force. Income support and social service programs are not within the scope of this domestic scan of best practices.

The remainder of this report provides an overview of documents that were consulted, the labour market situation of people with disabilities, factors associated with their low level of employment, approaches to thinking about 'best practice' and 'effective practice' in employment programming and characteristics of programming reported in the research literature that is showing evidence of effectiveness in furthering the employment of people with disabilities. Findings organized according to similar subject headings are also provided based on interviews that were conducted with government officials in each province and territory.

Documentary Sources Consulted

The following documents were consulted for this research:

- Summative evaluations of Employment Insurance Employment Benefits and Support Measures (EBSMs) under Part II of the *Employment Insurance Act,* with a focus on those facets of the evaluations that dealt with issues of employment and disability
- Annual Reports by the provinces and territories concerning programs they are operating under bilateral Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities, cost-shared with the federal government
- Most recent *Evaluation of the Canada Pension Plan Disability Vocational Rehabilitation Program*
- *Promising Practices in Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities (EAPD) Funded Programs and Services*
- *EI Reform and Persons with Disabilities*
- *Summative Evaluation of the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities* (2001 and 2008 versions)

As well, search engines and databases were searched that include PsycINFO, Medline, PubMed, Rehabdata – National Rehabilitation Information Centre (NARIC), Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Web of Science, EBSCO Host and Google Scholar. The databases were searched for articles from 2000 and afterwards that included the following search terms:

- *disability* or *disabilities* or *disabled* or *impaired* or *impairment* combined with search terms for:

  - employment (*employment, labour, work*) and

  - best practice (*best practice, effective practice, good practice)* and

  - *Canada*, then each *province and territory* in turn and

  - *evaluation* or *literature review.*

Wherever possible the review was confined to Canadian research and more specifically to programming that falls within Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities (LMAPDs). However, many of the scholarly materials available on issues of employment and disability are not Canadian and are not tied specifically to the LMAPDs, yet much of it does speak to general considerations that would be relevant in the Canadian policy and program context, e.g., people with disabilities' need for appropriate education and work-related training given their tendency to have lesser access to and levels of both. Where such materials seemed pertinent to the Canadian context they were included in the review. Documents that yielded pertinent information, whether Canadian or otherwise, are cited in the body of the report.

A few preliminary observations are in order. The Summative Evaluations of Employment Benefits and Support Measures under Part II of the *Employment Insurance Act* provide very little information about people with disabilities. For the most part the information takes the form of summary statistics and there is little information about how various 'active measures' operate in relation to people with disabilities. The Annual Reports for Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities provide high level descriptive information about employment programming funded under the LMAPDs but little in the way of analytical detail about the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of programming. This limitation was flagged in a 2006 report to federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) deputy ministers responsible for labour market programming for people with disabilities (FPT Working Group on Benefits and Services to Persons with Disabilities, 2006). The OECD (2010) has also pointed to difficulties with the indicators used in reporting under the LMAPDs and the general rather than specific level of detail that has been reported, which results in difficulties achieving comparability in analysis of program results across jurisdictions.

Challenges

Labour Market Situation of People with Disabilities: Low Employment

Many documents provide basic contextual information on the labour market situation of people with disabilities. Despite the fact that Canada led the G8 countries in employment growth from 2001 to 2006 and the employment situation of people with disabilities improved slightly over those years (Statistics Canada, 2008a), Canadians with disabilities have persistently remained much less likely to be employed than people without disabilities. According to Statistics Canada, 51.3% of working-age persons with disabilities were employed in 2006 compared with 75.1% of their counterparts without disabilities (Statistics Canada, 2008a). The respective rates of employment for people with and without disabilities were 40.3% vs. 69.9% in 1986, 48.2% vs. 72.9% in 1991 and 43.7% vs. 78.4% in 2001 (Roeher Institute, 1993; Statistics Canada, 1993; Statistics Canada, 2003). Yet only half of people with disabilities who are outside of the labour force say that their disability completely prevents them from working (Statistics Canada, 2008b) and many who feel completely prevented from working face social and economic barriers to obtaining employment.

The Government of Canada and various committees of Parliament have flagged the persisting low level of employment and income insecurity of a great many people with disabilities (Parliamentary Special Committee on the Disabled and the Handicapped, 1981; Canada, Federal Task Force on Disability Issues, 1996; Sub-Committee on The Status of Persons with Disabilities of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, 2001;

Canada, Office for Disability Issues, 2003). Statistics Canada has also drawn attention to the issue (e.g., Galarneau & Radulescu, 2009), as have other researchers (Kapsalis & Tourigny, 2007) and it has been an ongoing focus of policy attention by major disability organizations (e.g., Council of Canadians with Disabilities [CCD], 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009; Canadian Association for Community Living [CACL], 2006; 2009).

A thumbnail sketch of key elements in the federal-provincial-territorial policy and program 'system' for dealing with the low employment of people with disabilities is provided in Appendix 1.

Factors Associated with the Low Employment of People with Disabilities

A variety of factors account for people with disabilities' low rate of employment. Some are general socio-demographic factors such as gender, age, ethno-cultural diversity, education, work-related training and geographic location. Research has also associated disability-specific factors with the likelihood of employment. These include negative public attitudes and stigma associated with disability, the need for and availability of various disability-specific supports for employment, as well as type and severity of disability and age at disability onset.[1] The interaction between person-level and environmental factors can aggravate the disadvantages that people with disabilities encounter in the labour market (Shakespeare, 2006; World Health Organization, 2001; Roulstone & Barnes, 2005). The present section of this report explores some of the more salient of the general and disability-specific factors as context for subsequent exploration of implications for employment-related programs, including 'best practices'.

General Socio-demographic Factors

In terms of general socio-demographic factors, *women* are generally less likely to be employed than men (Brooks, 2005; Statistics Canada, 2008b), which can be explained in part by the childrearing and elder care responsibilities that fall disproportionately to women (Timpson, 2001; Johnson & Sasso, 2006). Gender also has a part to play in educational and occupational choices, e.g., women are less likely than men to have post-secondary education in business and the sciences and are more likely to have jobs in nursing and education (International Labour Office, 2004). However,

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[1] Many other disability-specific factors could also be explored but were beyond the time and resources available for this research. Such factors include, to name a few, the cause of disability (e.g., whether resulting from workplace accident or injury, another accident or injury, illness/disease, the aging process, etc.), underlying health conditions associated with episodic vs. stable and ongoing disability, disability-specific discrimination in employment, and attachment to disability-specific income support programs such as the Canada/Quebec Pension Plan Disability benefit and provincial/territorial social assistance programs for persons with disabilities. Income support/ replacement programs are beyond the scope of the present research.

there are issues that women with disabilities face in particular, (Fawcett, 2000), which include their greater tendency to live as a lone parent, their more limited opportunities for stable and high-paying jobs and limited opportunities for assistance with household tasks.

The *age* structure of the population with disabilities is quite different than the age structure within the general population (Statistics Canada, 2008b), with a proportionately greater share of people with disabilities being older due to the onset of disability in the working years for many people. It has been observed that people with disabilities in the 'core' working years (i.e., 25 to 54 years) are more likely to be employed than youths 15 to 24 years and older adults 54 to 64 years (Human Resources Development Canada, 2003).

Visible minority and Aboriginal person status are other factors that have a bearing on educational choices and occupational trajectories (e.g., Brown, 2002). Such demographic characteristics and attendant value systems can have specific implications for people with disabilities (e.g., Hogansen, Powers, Geenen, Gill-Kashiwabara & Powers, 2008; Campbell, 2008). While there is very little published material on the relationship between labour force participation and the Aboriginal person status of people with disabilities, the Regional Longitudinal Health Survey that was conducted in First Nations communities in 2002/2003 found that, irrespective of age group, the employment rates of First Nations people with disabilities are considerably lower than those of their non-disabled counterparts and much lower than those of the broader Canadian working-age population (First Nations Centre, 2005: Table 6). That research confirms other studies that have drawn from the Census of 1996 (McDonald, 2005: Table 1.13) and 2001 (Canada, 2004) and which also show low rates of employment for Aboriginal persons with disabilities. There is very little published research or other scholarly literature on visible minorities with disabilities in Canada. However, Tompa, Scott, Trevithick and Bhattacharyya (2006) have found in their statistical analysis of the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics that the all-year employment and labour force participation rates are similar for visible and non-visible minorities with disabilities. They suggest that anti-discrimination legislation may be serving to shield visible minorities with disabilities from additional incremental disadvantage relative to non-visible minorities with disabilities.

The level of *educational attainment* (Human Resources Development Canada, 2003) has significant implications for employment and other socially valued outcomes: generally speaking, the higher their level of educational attainment the greater the likelihood that people with disabilities will be employed (Williams, 2006). Along with education, *work-related training* is considered a key ingredient that improves the employment prospects of people with disabilities and that is a key predictor of occupational outcomes. For example, in its research for a provincial strategy on

disability, the Manitoba government found that "problems with training" were barriers for significant numbers of people with disabilities seeking employment (Manitoba, 2001). Similarly, the Conference Board of Canada identified the lack of access to "education and to formative, work-relevant experiences that help develop skills needed to compete for jobs" as significant barriers to employment for persons with disabilities in Canada (Conference Board of Canada, 2001). In a Canadian Centre on Disability Studies (CCDS) survey and report, at least one-quarter of the employers surveyed indicated the lack of right qualifications of persons with disabilities as a barrier to hiring them (CCDS, 2002). In documenting employers' practices in the recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities in Ontario and British Columbia, two studies by WCG International Consultants Ltd. ([WCG], 2004 & 2006) identified the need for greater access to relevant job skill training and workplace-based training for people with disabilities. From the perspective of people with disabilities, a Canadian Abilities Foundation (CAF) survey of persons with disabilities found that more than half of respondents agreed that they needed more practical training, such as specialized courses or on-the-job training (CAF, 2004). In spite of markedly different country-specific approaches, a common feature of vocational training across countries for people with disabilities is that it is generally initiated too late (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2003).

Research has shown how the rates of employment for people with disabilities vary significantly depending on *province/territory of residence*, with lower levels of employment found from Quebec eastwards (Roeher Institute, 1993; 2004; Statistics Canada, 2008a; Adele Furrie Consulting Inc. [AFCI], 2010).

Disability-specific Factors

Concerning disability-specific factors, *negative public attitudes and stigma* about disability as reflected in employer attitudes adversely affect the employment chances of Aboriginal and other people with disabilities (HRSDC, 2008; WCG International Consultants Inc. [WCG], 2004; Shier et al., 2009). While some local-level evidence suggests that popular opinion is becoming favourable towards people with intellectual disabilities working alongside others in mainstream employment settings (Burge et al., 2007), a nationally representative survey (Environics Research Group, 2004a) and pan-Canadian qualitative study (Environics Research Group, 2004b) found that, while public perceptions of people with physical disabilities tend to be supportive on the whole, this is not the case concerning people with intellectual and psychiatric disabilities. Even managers of some employment services may not be entirely supportive of or believe in the attainability of employment by people with disabilities (Bond et al., 2001).

The *need for various disability-related supports for employment*, and *whether those needs have been met*, has also been associated with lower likelihood of people with disabilities having employment (Statistics Canada, 2008a). Indeed, entire services have been devised to assist employers make available such necessary 'job accommodations' (e.g., Job Accommodation Network [JAN], 2012; Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work [CCRW], 2012). Such supports include human factors that are attitudinal in nature, such as supportive and unsupportive managers and co-workers, and instrumental human factors, such as assistance from a job coach, attendant, interpreter and so on. Other factors are procedural, such as modified work routines or days or hours of work. Some factors are technological, such as the presence or absence of needed assistive technologies in the work place (e.g., adapted keyboard, Braille output devices, scanners, machine readers, electronic note-takers, large print and other viewing, tactile and audio media), ergonomic measures (e.g., modified workstation or chair), built environmental features (e.g., accessible parking and passage ways to/from the workplace, accessible entrances and egresses, accessible washrooms and elevators and so on). Still other supports have a bearing on whether people can get to and from the workplace, such as accessible public transportation. Similar supports may be needed in places of learning, such as colleges, universities, technical institutes and other places where work-related training is provided.

Some evidence suggests that people with disabilities are less likely than their non-disabled counterparts to have access to flexible hours of work (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2004), even though this form of job accommodation is widely needed among working-age people with disabilities (Statistics Canada, 2008b). The lack of needed supports for employment may well be having a dampening effect on the employment of people with disabilities (Crawford, 2004; Prince, 2011).

Research has shown that employment rates vary considerably by *type of disability* (e.g., Crawford, 2004; Statistics Canada, 2008a and 2008b). Most recently, people with disabilities in the areas of pain, mobility, agility and hearing have fared comparatively well in terms of employment while people with various 'cognitive' disabilities (learning, developmental/intellectual, memory, psychological) and disabilities in the area of spoken communication and seeing have fared less well (Statistics Canada, 2008a and 2008b). *Age at disability onset* is also a salient factor: Fawcett (1996) and Loprest and Maag (2007) have found that people who acquire disability early in life are more likely to be employed than people who become disabled later in life. Similarly, research has shown that the greater the *severity or degree of disability,* the lower the likelihood of employment (Crawford, 2004; Statistics Canada, 2008b).[2]

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[2] Statistics Canada's measure of severity or degree of disability for what was its 'flagship' survey on disability, the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, is a complex, composite measure that looks

Defining 'Best Practice' and 'Effective Practice'

What, then, are some practice implications stemming from the general socio-demographic and disability-specific factors that have a bearing on the employment of people with disabilities? As Osburn et al. (2011) have pointed out, the notion of 'best practice' is frequently used in reference to programs and practices affecting persons with disabilities yet there is no commonly agreed upon definition and the term is often used without a clear basis in evidence. The authors propose that it would be preferable to use the terms 'evidence-based' and 'science-based' practice and to let the self-correcting nature of science sort out what actually turns out to be 'best' when all is said and done. Another approach, they propose, is to adopt a causal approach that ties specific inputs to predictable outcomes according to an 'if this... then that' formulation. Following a similar line of logic to the latter proposal, Businessdictionary.com (2011) provides an analogous definition of 'best practice' as, "A method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark."

That said, some researchers (Schultz, Krupta & Rogers, 2011) have found that the literature on employment outcomes for persons with mental health disorders is fragmented and that the research evidence is presently insufficient to develop best practice guidelines for employment interventions or job accommodations. Similarly, practitioners in the area of supported employment for people with intellectual and psychiatric disabilities (Alberta Association for Supported Employment, n.d.) have pointed out that, while some organizations have a fairly detailed understanding of what is meant by the term, there is no formal consensus as to what constitutes best practice in this area. 'Supported employment' is a 'place and train' approach to facilitating the access of people with disabilities to employment in the open labour market (Corrigan, 2001; Crowther et al, 2001; Rose & Harris, 2005).

Adopting a flexible approach to definition, a review by Human Resources Development Canada ([HRDC], 2002) of the Employability Assistance for Persons with Disabilities program in five provinces defined 'promising practices' as "the things that work well in employability programming for people with disabilities". Characteristics of 'promising practices' include: 1) strong client focus; 2) holistic approach to assessment of clients' interests, strengths and needs; 3) focus on ensuring appropriate education and/or on-the-job training; 4) education of and awareness raising among employers; 5) partnerships between programs and employers; 6) facilitation of client access to

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across broad domains of functioning (hearing, seeing, communicating and so on) and, so to speak, 'adds up' the cumulative amount of difficulty (some, a lot) that a given person experiences across all domains and in some cases (e.g., spoken communication, learning and psychological difficulties) the number of activities affected (a few, many, most) within the finer details of specific social contexts, such as with family members, friends and other people, or at home, school, play or in recreational activities (Statistics Canada, 2007).

voluntary work and work experience that leads to remunerative employment; 7) facilitation of ongoing communication between employment program staff, employers and clients with disabilities; 8) dedication and leadership by program staff; 9) high levels of client satisfaction; and 10) provision of wage subsidies to employers in some cases. That report organized some of the promising practices as to whether they characterized the client service process, or reduced attitudinal and perception barriers, environmental barriers in the workplace or barriers in education.

Echoing similar themes but organized according to a different report structure, Kirsh et al. (2009) have found that, aside from personal factors, common principles and practices guiding work integration for people with intellectual disabilities, brain injury and mental illness tend to take into account: attitudinal barriers in the workplace, such as the need for supportive employers and co-workers; the need to ensure that employment and accommodations in the workplace are congruent with the needs of the person, the demands of the occupation and resources in the work environment; and meeting the need for the individuals' access to ongoing support as required, whether professional or in the workplace.[3]

Such practices have been found promising or effective to the extent that they end in, or contribute to, employment in the open labour market, not in segregated work settings (HRDC, 2002). Employment in the regular labour market is typically a goal of organizations that have been analyzed in other research as well (e.g., Rizzo, 2002; Wehman et al., 2003; Sandys, 2003; Social Development Canada, 2004). That said, some (e.g., Butcher & Wilton, 2008) have questioned the wisdom of too rigid a focus on employment rather than also allowing for 'meaningful activity' as a sought-for outcome of employment-related programming for people with disabilities. As well, relatively little attention has been placed on 'precarious employment' as a perhaps unintended outcome of employment programming where paid work is pursued as a program outcome without attention to the quality of employment obtained, such as whether it is short-term, seasonal, part-time, low paid and lacking employee benefits (Vosko, 2006). People with disabilities – in particular women – may be especially prone to ending up in precarious employment if employed at all (Vick & Lightman, 2010; Wilton, 2006).

With respect to indicators of effective practice in post-secondary education and training programs, and measures to increase the capacity of employers to enhance the employability of people with disabilities, a report by the FPT Working Group on Benefits and Services for Persons with Disabilities (2006) found that there was no agreement across the provinces and that data gathering represents a significant challenge. Making much the same point, the Canadian Council of Learning (2006) has found that, in the absence of adequate benchmarking instruments and the "indirect, proxy and subjective

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[3] Other considerations are the philosophies that underlay work-related interventions and activities that constitute authentic work participation.

indicators [that] exist" (p. 57), indicators for assessing the quality of post-secondary education for the time being revolve around:

- Educational attainment
- Participation rates
- Public expenditures on education and training
- Demographic trends and institutional capacity
- Flexible, alternate delivery
- Credit transfer
- Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR); and
- Public opinion polling on PSE

How such an approach to data gathering and reporting on success in furthering post-secondary education for people with disabilities could be adapted and applied to community organizations remains unclear, given their short-term funding and the already significant administrative responsibilities they face in terms of client intake, disability assessment and case management functions (OECD, 2010); if governments are having difficulties rising to this challenge without infusions of new funding then almost certainly community organizations would have serious difficulties, too. That said, if funding were available and the recommendations of Heidrick, Kramers and Godin (2004) were to be followed, the approach could involve use of surveys of clients and organizational partners, together with case studies and cost/benefit analyses.

Characteristics of Effective Programming

HRDC's review of EAPD-funded programs found specific promising practices in the client service process, in measures to reduce attitudinal and perception barriers and measures to reduce barriers in work and learning environments.[4] What follows, here, draws from those findings together with supporting evidence from other scholarly and selected program literature.

Generally speaking, many of the practices that HRDC found 'promising' in its review of EAPD-funded programs continue to be practiced by organizations that are seeking to further the employment of people with disabilities.

Service Delivery

Staff Expertise and Values

Perhaps it goes without saying, but researchers have found that employment agency personnel need to have the necessary expertise, experience and understanding to address the barriers and issues faced by people with various types and degrees of

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[4] HRDC also observed barriers arising from disincentives embedded in income support programs.

disability[5] (HRDC, 2002. See also Broad & Saunders, 2008; Cook & O'Day, 2006; Stewart et al., 2006). Personnel should also be cognizant of the double disadvantages that women with disabilities face in employment (Thomas, 1999; HRSDC, 2002; Bodkin & El-Helou, 2001; Foster, 2007). Effective personnel treat clients with dignity and respect, and as unique individuals with untapped potential for employment and personal growth. They avoid stereotypical assumptions and labelling (Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2010a-d).

Strengthening Individuals' Self-Confidence

Organizations that are effective in furthering the employment of people with disabilities are attentive to and provide opportunities for people with disabilities to develop self-confidence (HRDC, 2002. See also Rogan, 2000; Crawford, 2004; Fenton et al., 2000; Wolf Spirit Services Inc., 2011; Coalition of Persons with Disabilities, 2011). Development of self-confidence has been found to be an important outcome of programming irrespective of disability (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada [HRSDC], 2009a; HRSDC, 2009b), but for people with disabilities it can help enable them to break down negative societal assumptions and attitudes about disability in their dealings with others (HRSDC 2002). An effective organization will nurture relationships that build the trust and confidence of Aboriginal people that the organization is serving (HRDC, 2002; Wolf Spirit Services Inc., 2011).

Holistic Counselling and Planning

In terms of employment counselling and planning, organizations that demonstrate promising practices engage in a holistic planning process that looks at the 'whole person' and that involves the following interlinked actions: taking self-referred clients or clients referred by health or rehabilitation practitioners; assessing the client for an understanding of services and programs they need in order to make progress towards employment; assisting in the identification of employment-related goals and in the development of an (employment-related) plan of action; helping to implement the plan by facilitating access to courses, skills enhancement, job placements and other services (HRDC, 2002; Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2001a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d; CNIB, 2006; Cameto, Levine & Wagner, 2004; Inge et al., 2007; Dunn et al., 2008; Goss Gilroy Inc., 2006); monitoring client progress and, as necessary, helping to adjust the plan to make provision for further education or skills training, work search or employment (Wadsworth & Cocco, 2002; Alberta Children and Youth Initiative [ACYI], 2007). The counselling is 'holistic' in that it takes into account clients' personal likes and dislikes, as well as issues related to housing, family, health, medications, interpersonal skills, behaviours, addictions and needs for technology (HRDC 2002; Biersdorff, 2002; Stewart et al., 2010). It may be necessary to conduct a prior screening of potential clients

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[5] E.g., psychiatric, physical (mobility, agility), Learning Disabilities, sensory (e.g., seeing, hearing, speaking), developmental or intellectual, addictions and other non-visible disabilities (e.g., environmental sensitivities, depression).

in order to ascertain whether they are likely to benefit from the services the organization provides (HRSDC, 2002).

Finding 'Goodness of Fit' between the Individual and the Employment Situation

Organizations that are effectively furthering the employment chances of people with disabilities endeavour to facilitate a good match between the needs of employers on the one hand and, on the other, clients' skill sets and abilities (HRDC, 2002; Pierce et al., 2003; Wehman et al., 2003; Chiocchio & Frigon, 2006; Corr & Wilmer, 2003; Power & Hershenson, 2003; Kirsh, 2000; Kirsh et. Al, 2009).

Self-employment and social enterprises are mentioned in the research literature as forms of employment that people with disabilities may gravitate towards because regular jobs may not seem available or because those forms of employment afford greater flexibility than standard jobs with employers (Kirsh, et al., 2006; Broad & Saunders, 2008). Although self-employment may be relatively precarious (Tompa, et al., 2006), there is little research on programs that facilitate access to either form of employment in the Canadian context. Social enterprises have social missions while endeavouring to meet the needs and capacities of employees in governance, management, type of work and ongoing employee support.

Overcoming Barriers in the Workplace

Ensuring Ongoing Support is Available

Organizations that are working effectively to further the employment of people with disabilities either provide, or ensure provision of, ongoing support to clients, whether clients are studying or working (HRDC, 2002; Holtzberg, 2001; Possl et al., 2001; Rogan et al., 2000; Mueller et al., 2003; Kirsh et al., 2009). The supports should foster independence and equality of competition in the open labour market (HRDC, 2002; Hendricks, et al., 2005; Eastabrook et al., 2004; Vandergang, 2003; HRDC, 2001; Bishop et al., 2000). Organizations may have to conduct analyses of accommodation requirements in the workplace (or educational setting) as required (HRDC, 2002; Gates et al., 2005; Barron, 2010).

The human support may be consultative for individuals with disabilities and employers, assisting them to deal with changes in tasks and circumstances and the impacts of disability (HRDC, 2002; National Council on Intellectual Disability [NCID], 2010; Gates, et al., 2005; Broad & Saunders, 2008). The support may be instrumental, such as on-site facilitators or job coaches for individuals and indirectly for employers who provide employment or job placements to clients (HRSDC, 2002; Chaytor Consulting Services Ltd, 2007; HRSDC, 2010a). Support may also be technological in nature and should be arranged on an individualized basis that matches client needs to

technologies required at work or in educational settings (British Columbia, 2010; Gordon, et al., 2007).

For individuals, the support may involve a combination of measures, including accessible washrooms, flexible transportation, affordable childcare and coordinated transportation between childcare and the workplace (HRDC, 2002; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2009; Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2010). Whichever form the employment-related supports take for individuals, they should be affordable and, if required, portable from situation to situation, e.g., between home, school and work (HRDC, 2002; HRSDCa, 2010; Goss Gilroy Inc., 2006).

For employers, the support that organizations may be called upon to provide could include assistance with rendering a range of employment-related processes and tasks more accessible and supportive for people with disabilities. Such processes and tasks include those related to recruitment, hiring, assignment and performance of job duties, promotion, training and termination (HRDC, n.d.; Public Service Commission of Canada, 2011).

Providing Employer Education

Effective organizations typically educate employers about the potential value and abilities of people with disabilities as employees (HRDC, 2002; Hernandez et al., 2000; Unger, 2002; Gilbride et al., 2000; Kirsh et al., 2005; Manck et al., 2003; Storey, 2003; WCG, 2004, 2006). Indeed, some have found it necessary to build a strong business case to present to employers in order to persuade them to consider hiring people with disabilities (WCG, 2004; British Columbia, 2011; Kirsh et al., 2010; Public Service Commission of Canada, 2011). Organizations may also have to educate employers about job accommodation supports that are available and how to obtain them (HRDC, 2002; WCG, 2004).

Overcoming Barriers in Education

People with disabilities are less likely than their non-disabled counterparts to participate in post-secondary education and training (Hango & de Broucker, 2007; Looker, 2001; Canadian Council on Social Development, 2004; Canadian Council on Learning, 2006) and relatively few are involved with the disability services at colleges and universities (Fichten, et al., 2003; Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2008: Tables 47 & 48). Youth 19 to 24 years with disabilities are nearly twice as likely as their non-disabled counterparts to have dropped out of high school and to have stopped their formal education at that point (22.5% vs. 12.5%) and are less than half as likely as their non-disabled counterparts to move directly into college (5.1% vs. 13.4%) or university (5.4% vs. 11.6%) within four months of graduating high school (Hango & de Broucker, 2007).

Key barriers to post-secondary education for people with disabilities are: 1) physical inaccessibility of post-secondary programs and lack of accessible public transportation to learning opportunities; 2) unaffordable programs and courses for learners with disabilities, and difficulties negotiating the administrative demands of applying for student aid; and 3) the attitudes of instructors, who do not always allow for the disability related resources that students require to learn, such as note-takers or additional time for tests (Canadian Council on Learning [CCL], 2009. See also Titchkosky, 2008; Low, 2009). As well, concerns about prospective student debt load and the ability to repay the debt in view of an uncertain employment situation, as well as lack of needed assistive technologies, medications and human supports, adversely affect people with disabilities' participation in post-secondary training and education (Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2008; Crawford, 2004; Chambers et al., 2009 and 2011).

Solutions include:

- More accessible funding for learners with disabilities;

- Accessible transportation and buildings/classrooms;

- Alternative formats for learning and testing;

- Peer support networks and services for adult learners with disabilities; and

- Disability awareness training for educators (CCL, 2009).

While there has been progress in recent years in facilitating access to post-secondary education of significantly under-represented groups such as people with intellectual disabilities, (Hughson, Moodie, & Uditsky, 2007; Mosoff, Greenholtz, and Hurtado,2009; and Weinkauf, 2002), that progress has been confined for the most part to the provinces west of Ontario (Bruce, 2011). An exception is Adult Connections in the Education Program at the University of Prince Edward Island (CCL, 2009).

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) has pointed to the need for better coordination between high schools and colleges / institutes in terms of orientation to postsecondary education and career options, the need to develop more integrated approaches across and within institutions and to foster partnerships with community organizations for assistance in ensuring that the needs of students with disabilities are addressed in a holistic manner (ACCC, 2008). Indeed, community organizations that have been working to increase the access of people with disabilities to post-secondary education have provided supports to clients in those settings (HRDC, 2002) and have developed a range of resources such as orientation guides for use by post-secondary students and educators, as well as programs to improve the independent living skills needed for success in post-secondary programs (CCL, 2009). That said,

there does not appear to be much Canadian research on how community organizations are working with post-secondary places of learning to further the participation of people with disabilities in post-secondary learning opportunities.

Other Characteristics: Organizational Networking and Collaboration

Various researchers have found that linkages tend to be weak between agencies that provide employment-related services to people with disabilities and with employers (Church et al., 2007; Crooks, 2007; Giaquinto & Ring, 2007; Priest et al., 2008). In that context, an overarching success factor in EAPD promising practices was the extensive networking and collaborative working links between the organizations that demonstrate promising practices and employers, orders of government, agencies that provide complementary services and financial assistance, medical professionals, educational institutions, families of clients and people with disabilities as board and committee members who provide advice and advocacy (HRDC, 2002; See also Wolf Spirit Services Inc., 2011). Organizational networking for the purpose of leveraging additional resources to further the employability and employment of people with disabilities has also been a process in which many organizations have engaged in initiatives funded under the federal Opportunities Fund (Human Resources and Social Development Canada [HRSDC], 2008) and the Community Inclusion Initiative (HRSDC, 2007). As well, collaboration among stakeholders in the employment of people with disabilities is a stated principle for the LMAPD in Manitoba (Manitoba, 2010).

Descriptive Analysis of Effective Programming Explored in Interviews with Government Officials

Interviews of about one hour in duration were conducted with government officials in each province and territory. The introduction to the interviews explained that the purpose was not to conduct a comparative evaluation across jurisdictions but rather to explore program actions and factors that seem to account for effective practices in furthering the employment and employability of people with disabilities. The interviews followed an open-ended semi-structured format. It was informed by a list of program factors associated with effective programming that had been developed based on the review of the literature (Appendix 2). That list of program factors was used flexibly to probe for details. The essential research question was, "Where programs seem to be working effectively to foster the employment and employability of people with disabilities, what kinds of initiatives are we talking about and what are the factors that help account for their effectiveness?" The levels and units of analysis in the interviews varied considerably. For some jurisdictions, the discussion focused on broad-level policy and program instruments that community-level service organizations can use in their efforts to prepare people for, move them into and support them in employment. For some jurisdictions the discussion revolved around one or two organizations that provide most of the disability-related employment programming there, or that stand out as exemplary agencies. In other jurisdictions the discussion reflected a mix of analytical levels and units of analysis, ranging from the broadly systemic to the community level. This section of the report provides key themes that emerged from those conversations. Generally the discussions reflected the kinds of findings included in the literature review. Some other points were made, however, that did not surface in a major way in the review of the literature.

General Challenges

Some over-riding challenges for employment programs for people with disabilities are geography, lack of transportation, lack of employment in some communities and booming employment in other communities, the challenge of finding supportive employers and developing indicators that reflect the nuanced activities that need to be undertaken to foster employment and employability where individuals with disabilities present complex challenges.

It was observed that, particularly in the northern territories, the geographical spaces are vast and the population relatively thinly dispersed and in some communities very sparse. This basic fact of life presents significant challenges in terms of service infrastructure. For instance, in Nunavut, where it can be difficult to find a place to live and where many public spaces and places of commerce are physically inaccessible, few services specifically target people with disabilities, there. In the Northwest Territories

there is employment-related programming in Yellowknife but little in other communities, an issue that that branches of the NWT Disabilities Council are trying to address by developing programs in Hay River, Inuvik and the Tlicho region. Lack of service infrastructure for people with disabilities was also raised as an issue in other rural communities south of the sixtieth parallel.

As with disability-specific service infrastructure, the lack of general services such as public transportation is also problematic in the northern territories and in rural communities south of the sixtieth parallel; even where services for people with disabilities in place, it can be a challenge for people to get to them in the absence of community transportation.

Seasonal employment in the north and lack of employment in many rural communities can make it difficult for anyone to find jobs, including people with disabilities.

In contrast to job scarcity, the abundance of jobs in some sectors of the economy presents challenges for the disability service sector. For instance, in Saskatchewan the migration of people into the petroleum industry with its relatively high paying jobs has created an outmigration of people from the disability service sector and has made it difficult for that sector to attract qualified people to provide employment-related and other services. That province has tried to deal with this issue by developing a training curriculum that the Supported Employment Training Initiative (SETI), community colleges and universities deliver to new staff in the disability sector.

Another general challenge is for organizations to find supportive employers to work with individuals who may experience significant employment challenges, such as people with mental illness, people with severe disability or complex needs or with little or no previous employment experience.

Several respondents commented on the difficulty developing and using indicators for reporting and accountability that accurately reflect the kinds of interventions that are being implemented to foster the employment of people who have complex employment-related needs. For instance, conventional reporting on programs under the Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities requires reporting on numbers of participants, program completions and the number of people gaining/maintaining employment. The reports also show broad societal indicators such as provincial employment rates, employment earnings and highest level of educational certification for people with and without disabilities (HRSDC, 2008). It was pointed out, however, that it is unreasonable to expect that some people will be hired in the near term, particularly if they lack necessary life and job skills and have never had a job before or have had only marginal attachment to employment. How, then, to capture the interventions that have been used and those individuals' progress towards employment?

One respondent commented on the difficulties tracking people and outcomes over time. He said, "We have the participation levels and the services received but not where people ended up... What about if you can't find someone afterwards? What are the outcomes?"

Service Delivery

Skilled Staff

A cross-cutting theme in the interviews was the need for qualified personnel to deliver employment-related services to people with disabilities. It is essential that they have an understanding of disability, of the local labour market, be well connected with employers, be able to market the skills and abilities of their clients to employers and understand how to plan effectively to help clients move along a continuum that may begin with little or no work experience to finding a job, retaining it and progressing in their career. Also, one respondent indicated the most effective staff "have a finger on the pulse of the community, are aware of how to navigate the system, how to obtain financial assistance and training and find employers that are supportive." Generally it would appear that the qualifications of agency staff are determined by community agencies and could include a mix of formal academic education and practical experience. Despite some efforts to develop and adopt national standards in this connection and aside from the curriculum developed by SETI in Saskatchewan, there does not seem to be a general trend at the present time towards more extensive formal 'professionalization' of people working in disability employment agencies. One respondent said that this matter was "not a burning issue".

Specialization and Diversification

While the pattern varies by jurisdiction, generally a mix of providers deliver employment-related services to people with disabilities. People with disabilities who qualify for services under Part II of the Employment Insurance Act would try to access services from those generic service providers. However, many people do not qualify for EI and would approach organizations that have service capacity specific to disability and employment. Some organizations adopt a cross-disability approach and will serve anyone with a disability, whereas other organizations have a specialized focus. For instance, in Manitoba, Family Services and Consumer Affairs ('Family Services'), which is staffed across Manitoba but concentrated in Winnipeg, focuses on people with intellectual, learning and psychiatric disabilities. People with other disabilities are served by three designated providers in Manitoba: the Canadian Paraplegic Association, which serves people with spinal cord injury; the CNIB-MB Division, which serves people with visual disabilities; and the Society of Manitobans with Disabilities, which serves people with physical disabilities, acquired brain injury and people who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. In contrast, the Yellowknife Association for Community Living provides that territory's Employability Service to people with all types of disability in

that community, even though the organization is a member of a national and provincial federation that focuses on the inclusion and well-being of people with intellectual disability. Other organizations such as CNIB may help scope out disability-specific supports that may be needed on the job. In other jurisdictions there are similar mixes of organizations that focus on people with any disability and people with particular disabilities.

While the literature review flagged the need for sensitivity in employment programs to issues faced by women, youth and Aboriginal people, there would not seem to be a major focus on such issues in employment programming for people with disabilities, with the exception of youth transition programming, which is discussed in the section on service coordination.

Self-Confidence Building

The interviews found few intentional program strategies with a primary focus on strengthening the self-confidence of people with disabilities as a necessary condition of employment. That said, several respondents indicated that self-confidence was often a by-product of individuals' participation in employment planning, work experience and post-secondary studies. In New Brunswick it was observed that young people moving through the inclusive education system, there, tend to hold much the same kinds of expectations about their future employment as other students with disabilities. The Students Exploring Through (SET) Mentoring process is used in Newfoundland and Labrador[6] to help students transition into the community and/or work place after finishing high school. It pairs students with adult mentors with disabilities to enable students, on an individualized basis, to learn about careers, explore community and volunteer options and alternatives for when they finish high school. SET has reportedly had "good results" in rural communities.

Individualized, Holistic Approach and Long-Range Approaches

In all jurisdictions, the programs that seem to be working most effectively at furthering the employment of people with disabilities take a highly individualized, holistic approach to their analysis of people's employment-related and other needs, job counselling, career planning, placement and follow-up support. It is individualized in that it attends to the particular employment-related skills, interests, needs and strengths of the clients served. It is holistic in that it attends to other matters that may have to be addressed for employment to become a viable option. For instance, the 'stabilization and work readiness' dimension of Saskatchewan's six-dimension Employability Framework helps to address basic needs in order for individuals to be ready and able to

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[6] SET is an initiative of the Newfoundland & Labrador Association for Community Living and is funded by the Department of Human Resources Labour & Employment, in partnership with the Green Bay and Gambo Employment Corporations, and the Nova Central School District.

work, e.g.., child care, transportation, housing, assistance with hygiene and self-management. The Ministry of Social Services may help a client of an employment agency funded by Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration to connect to housing, obtain a rental housing supplement and secure supplementary health benefits.

In at least one jurisdiction the employment planning is also very long range. Understanding that it is common in today's economy for people to have several jobs over the course of their working career, Saskatchewan's employability 'career growth' dimension of its employability framework involves support for career movement/advancement and for managing career change. Such services may include upskilling or career laddering services and re-employment support. This dimension is premised on the understanding that an individual has a career goal and will continuously need to be 'upscaling', learning, connecting for mentoring, acquiring references and networking with people in their chosen career field. Re-employment support is necessary where individuals are laid off, such as Employment Insurance recipients with and without disabilities. Or such support may be required for a person working in an occupation for a long time, such as a truck driver, who becomes injured and who needs an alternative job that enables his/her ongoing productivity. The aim is not only to help people find a 'boat' to a job but to help the individual to plan for the next employment opportunity on the 'career river' to their ultimate career destination.

Employment Focused

All jurisdictions are targeting the employment of people with disabilities as the ultimate aim of their undertakings. For instance, in Ontario funding for employment services under the employment stream of the Ontario Disability Support Program has been transformed to an outcome-based system. Service providers are funded based on the extent to which they find jobs for clients. While this approach is currently being evaluated, evidence to date suggests that more people with disabilities are finding jobs under the new system than under the previous funding model. Previously there was much effort invested in assessments, barriers analysis and so on but it was questionable whether many individuals successfully found jobs in the end. While in PEI psychometric and other such tests may be used from time to time, it was pointed out that such tests are "not necessarily valid. The best approach," said the respondent, "is to look at the holistic picture of the person's interests, background, skills and realistic possibilities." In BC, Income Assistance recipients with disabilities are expected to have an employment plan. That said, a person with a disability does not have to be an Income Assistance recipient in order to garner support to develop and implement such a plan.

While employment is a sought for goal, interviewees from several jurisdictions expressed the view that something less than full-time employment may be all that can be realistically expected of some individuals and that this may take a considerable period of time and preparation for them to be able to work at that level. They indicated

that such a level of employment should be recognized as valid, as should the efforts undertaken to enable individuals to demonstrate that level of work capacity.

Coordination

The issue of service coordination in employment-related programming did not surface as a major focus of attention in the research literature, although the OECD (2010) and other researchers (e.g., Stapleton & Tweddle, 2008) have pointed to this issue as one that needs to be addressed. Several interview respondents also indicated that this issue needs to be dealt with for many individuals if programming is to work effectively. The ways in which the issue is addressed varies but the overarching commonalities are that government staff, community agency staff or a combination of the two will assist individuals to coordinate and manage their mix of income support, employment-related services, training / education and disability supports.

Schools may have a formalized transition planning process that seeks to coordinate supports that a young person may require upon leaving high school. An example is Ontario's Youth Transition Project, which includes representatives from school boards, service agencies and parents at the local level. A systemic-level Youth Transitions Framework involves representatives from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Manitoba's Coordinated Transition Planning involves the ministry of Health, Children and Adolescents, Family Services and Marketabilities, the latter being the lead ministry for providing employment-related services to people with disabilities in that province. Support services at colleges and universities may also play a lead role in coordinating a range of supports that post-secondary students require, which occurs in Saskatchewan and Ontario.

Manitoba has a self-directed option for people who feel that they can manage their own employment plan without the assistance of a vocational counsellor. Such individuals can apply to develop and implement a self-managed plan and submit the application to Marketabilities for its staff and representatives from the disability community to consider for approval.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, supported employment is reportedly one of the mainstays of positive practices. Ongoing supports are needed for people with intellectual disabilities. A challenge is reportedly to get service agencies to think into the future where every individual can leave school and have the supports needed to participate in the labour market. Human Resources, Labour and Employment is working with the Department of Education to identify the scope of the challenge and what is needed to turn the vision into reality. They are trying to identify how many students are leaving school and how many need supports. In Transitional Supports to Employment, students in their last year of high school can get afterschool, weekend, and summer employment.

An aim of the departments is that, with this work experience, when students leave school they will see themselves moving into the labour market instead of into a day program. The respondent said that the province has had, "Pretty good experiences with this. We're hoping to build on this. We're looking for dollars for the ongoing supports. The LMDA [Labour Market Development Agreement] funds the operations of supports and the province provides the job trainer support piece. We're looking to expand the job trainer piece through [the province's] poverty reduction [strategy]".

Achieving the Right 'Fit'

Most organizations, whether government or community-based, are trying to achieve a good 'fit' between what the employer needs and what the person with a disability has, or has the potential, to offer. Some initiatives, however, endeavour to achieve this in ways outside of regular employment. In Quebec, for instance, Adapted Enterprises consists of a network of 40 enterprises that are adapted to offer work to people with disabilities. This network of enterprises is growing, with four new ones joined in the past year; most are non-profits. A funding requirement is that at least 60% of employees must have disabilities. The enterprises are subsidized by the Ministère de l'Emploi et d la Solidarité Sociale to fully adapt production modes to the needs of people with disabilities. The enterprises also receive a productivity compensation subsidy for each of the employees. About 4,400 people with disabilities are in such enterprises receiving subsidies. Examples of the work they perform include the production of high quality shoes for children, recycling and making electric cables. While some provide food catering and other services, most of the enterprises are involved in manufacturing rather than services.[7] Similarly, several social enterprises in Ontario that employ people with disabilities have been funded under the Employment Supports stream of the ODSP (Broad & Saunders, 2008). A Summer Café that employs mostly people with disabilities has been operating in Yellowknife for several decades, now. Nova Scotia's social enterprises under that province's Cooperative Council include people with disabilities.

Self-employment is another form of work that people with disabilities may move into. The Toronto Business Development Centre's BIZ Futures is a skills development and business support program designed specifically for persons with disabilities in this connection. It combines business skills development workshops with one-on-one advisory support to help participants develop their business plans and launch their business idea. In Ontario, some but not all service providers of the ODSP Employment Supports provide a range of self-employment services to people with disabilities. New Brunswick, Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador also provide self-employment options for people with disabilities. While this option is available in Nunavut it is difficult to implement because there are few commercial spaces for rent. As business

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[7] For more information, see *Adapted Enterprise.* Retrieved from http://cqea.ca/en/adapted-enterprise/

would typically be run out of individuals' own homes, and many of the homes are public housing, business owners get upset for the perceived advantage such new businesses would have in terms of overhead costs.

In Saskatchewan the Supported Employment Training Initiative (SETI) provides incubator funding for demonstration projects on supported employment in communities where supported employment is not in place, yet. SETI includes on its Steering Committee representatives from Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration (AEEI), Social Services, the provincial Office of Disability Issues, the Ministry of Education and representatives from provincial disability organizations. These are stakeholders with a common interest in developing work opportunities for people with disabilities. The Steering Committee determines annual priorities, sets out the terms of Requests for Proposals, decides who will be granted funding and monitors and helps manage the programs over the fiscal year. In addition to incubating supported employment demonstration projects, SETI has developed tool kits for employers on hiring people with disabilities.

Overcoming Barriers in the Workplace

Several interviewees indicated that a significant barrier to employment is employer concern about the costs of hiring a person with a disability in terms of direct cash outlays for supports and training and indirect costs such as lower productivity. These issues are being addressed in several ways. In several jurisdictions information has been made available that communicates positive messaging about people with disabilities' productivity and work ethic.[8]

Wage subsidies are also being used. In Saskatchewan, for instance, a training subsidy, which will fade over time, may be provided to an employer so an individual can learn new skills on the job. Conversely, a productivity subsidy may continue, which is often coordinated with the earnings exemption requirements or 'clawback' threshold of the provincial social assistance program. The Contract program in Quebec gives money to the employer to compensate for any lack of productivity on the part of an employee with disabilities. The funding was allocated in respect of about 5,000 people in 2010. Employers who receive the funding also get support for longer term investments in specialized services for employment. Evaluation of the individual with a disability is conducted systematically to determine eligibility and their potential level of participation in employment. Follow-up evaluations are conducted to determine job

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[8] See, for instance, New Brunswick's *Myths about hiring persons with disabilities.* Retrieved from http://www.gnb.ca/0048/PCSDP/PDF/Myth%20Busters%20ENG.pdf, and the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario's *Common myths about people with disabilities and the reality.* Retrieved from http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/programs/accessibility/understanding_accessibility/common_myths.aspx

performance and the level of subsidy; some individuals, such as people with psychiatric disabilities improve in terms of job performance so the subsidy may be reduced, whereas others such as those with intellectual disabilities remain fairly stable in terms of job performance so the subsidy tends to remain constant. Most of the subsidy is used to defray salary costs.[9] The availability of a training-on-the-job agreement that includes a wage subsidy was reported as inherent to long-term employment success under Manitoba's Marketabilities. This measure has proven useful for reluctant employers who are concerned about training costs. To help allay employer concerns, the subsidy will cover training costs up to 100% of minimum wage for up to a year. In return, the employer agrees to provide employment during the funded period on the understanding that the individual will be hired when the subsidy ends. An employment counsellor is involved with the employer and client to provide ongoing monitoring to make sure that things are going well and that there are no 'big surprises'. Prince Edward Island has similar arrangements where subsidies can be granted for 22 to 26 weeks based on assurances that a percentage will go to work full time or part time and a percentage will return to school; Newfoundland and Labrador also has a subsidy for up to 52 weeks for people with disabilities; Ontario has a similar arrangement for on-the-job training, whereby the amount and duration of training subsidy is negotiated between the service provider and the employer based on the client's training needs.

Other barriers in the workplace are overcome by ensuring that individuals and employers have access to ongoing supports for disability-related issues.

Ensuring Ongoing Support is Available

Several interview respondents spoke to the importance of ensuring that individuals with disabilities and employers have access to post-placement support as needed. This is a key component of Saskatchewan's 'job maintenance' dimension of its Employability Framework. Similarly, an interview respondent related how an agency in Charlottetown assures the employer that the individual seeking a job placement has the right skills and that staff will explain in advance to the employer about the background of the individual being placed, any challenges that might be encountered and how the program will be available to assist in the event of difficulties. That organization's staff will even fill in for the individual in the event that he/she misses a day's employment due to illness or for other reasons. Such measures are intended to incentivize job placements with employers and to ensure that employers know they will have the follow-up support needed for long term job retention. Ongoing on-the-job support for

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[9] Some challenges with this program are that a person may receive the subsidy over many years and it can cover up to 85% of minimum wage, although the average coverage is 56%. The minimum wage has increased and, because the population is getting older, more complex needs are triggering release of higher subsidy amounts. As well, employees may face an interruption of work where their employer faces the prospect of a reduction in the subsidy.

individuals with intellectual disabilities is available through the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Boards in Alberta and from Career and Employment in the Northwest Territories. In the latter jurisdiction it was reported that, "some clients are worked with for years and years". Newfoundland and Labrador's Human Resources, Labour and Employment is looking to expand the availability of long-term on-the-job trainers for individuals with disabilities. Long-term support for individuals and employers is available under Manitoba's Marketabilities program. Ongoing personal assistance for individuals with disabilities is available from New Brunswick's Disability Support Program. Interview respondents indicated that the availability of personal support for activities at home can lead individuals to develop a greater sense of their own employability and can help them to raise their aspirations in this regard, even if the employment sought may not be full-time. In Ontario, through ODSP Employment Supports, clients who are placed in a job can receive up to three years of retention support from their service provider for such things as addressing performance issues, identifying accommodation needs and negotiating workplace supports.

The ongoing availability of needed assistive technologies for mobility, seeing, hearing, communicating and learning is handled differently in each jurisdiction. Typically post-secondary institutions make some provision for, or can help students obtain, the aids and devices that are required in post-secondary training and education. Departments responsible for disability-related employment programming such as Newfoundland and Labrador's Human Resources, Labour and Employment, may be able to fund aids and devices needed in post-secondary education and the workplace. In Saskatchewan, colleges and universities have contracts with Advanced Education, Employment and Training to make such technologies available as do some community service organizations. Ontario's ODSP Employment Supports may be able to cover costs of assistive technologies where the Assistive Devices Program under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is unable to do so. The ODSP may also be able to assist with the purchase of work-related ergonomic measures where clearly required because of disability and where the employer lacks the financial capacity to cover the cost. A reported strength of New Brunswick's Disability Support Program (DSP) is that, even though some funding may be available from Training and Employment Support Services, the DSP would be the "main stop" for help in addressing needs for technologies in education and employment. In Alberta, Disability Related Employment Supports (DRES) may be available to fund worksite accommodations. Supports may be available during the job search and in the workplace. Supports can include specialized computer software, assistive devices, sign language interpreters and other worksite modifications. Results from a 2004 evaluation of the program (Alberta Human Resources and Employment, 2004) indicated that clients are more likely to be employed after receiving DRES supports (50%) than prior to receiving these supports (39%). Similarly, the

Disability Support Program in Prince Edward Island is reportedly "always looking for ways to improve quality of life in employment".

In some jurisdictions, individuals who do not have an ongoing relationship with employment services for people with disabilities may be supported by those services in order to remain employed. For instance, Newfoundland and Labrador is able to provide funding for technological supports for anyone who is at risk of losing their job. The eligibility requirements are "not very restrictive". An example given was a hearing aid for a person with late onset hearing loss. Manitoba has had much the same experience under Marketabilities. Vocational crisis support is available to people not currently involved with the program in the event that late onset of disability, such as deafness or hardness of hearing, or another matter that exacerbates the person's existing disability, renders their employment precarious. Such an individual could approach the program for a quick response, such as the purchase of specialized equipment, or the services of a counsellor to problem solve their situation with the employer. The worker seeking assistance could have been employed for many years before needing to approach Marketabilities for such support. For unemployed people the crisis support is generally provided to assist individuals get ready for work, facilitate access to employment and to help them maintain employment.

It was beyond the scope of the present research to explore how measures in income assistance programs have been or could be adjusted to further the employment and employability of people with disabilities. However, respondents in BC, Ontario and New Brunswick indicated that changes have been made so that people with disabilities can remain eligible for extended drug, dental and other coverage while employed. Said one respondent, "We need to communicate to clients that they won't lose everything" if working.

Furthering Post-Secondary and Other Learning

Aside from ensuring that students with disabilities have the required supports for post-secondary training, several other measures have been adopted that interview respondents indicated were consistent with effective practice. While there is no provincial employment funding for participation in university programs in British Columbia, short-term training at colleges is funded in that province. Most publicly funded training through the Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities is for classroom-based programs, which include job search skills, resume writing and life skills.

In Alberta, attention has been placed on the mix of classroom-based training and learning through work experience. For instance, traditional employment agency practice has been to arrange for classroom-based training instead of a mix of classroom-based training and work experience. In this context, services offered under the Transitional

Vocational Program (TVP) have proven successful and popular. TVP focuses on youth with developmental disabilities who have left high school and supports a range of programs across the province. One of the most successful of these arranges work experience for three days a week and classroom training for two days. Classroom training involves life skills and the program may arrange a variety of work placements in order to determine the young person's employment interests. There is large demand and a long wait list for this program. It has reportedly had good success in terms of assisting youth move into employment. Alberta Human Services defines 'success' as having 60% of TVP individuals employed full-time or part-time within six months of program completion and 5% in further training within six months.[10]

In Saskatchewan, many employment services are delivered by disability services on school, college and university campuses. Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration has entered into contract arrangements with these providers whereby it specifies targets for outcomes and deliverables and works with the service providers to develop service plans with a focus on results. The ministry encourages service providers to network and learn from one another in terms of the innovative approaches they have developed. These funding and service agreements reportedly comprise one of the "secrets of success" in furthering the employment of people with disabilities in Saskatchewan in that the contracts target results, not how the results are to be achieved. This approach reportedly allows for innovation, for organizations to follow their own understanding of best practice and to find local solutions to local needs.

The policy position of Manitoba is that education and training is an area where efforts need to be focused in order to 'level the playing field' for people with disabilities. Accordingly, significant funding is concentrated on post-secondary education, including disability supports for education, tuition, books and supplies. The experience in Manitoba has been that, the longer individuals with disabilities are supported to remain in education the better the employment outcomes. For instance, some internal research has found that six month training is not necessarily going to yield sought-for employment outcomes, whereas investing in longer-term educational programming for individuals achieves better outcomes.

What seems to be working well in Ontario is where individuals are able to ensure coordination of the supports they need for participation in Employment Ontario training and education programs. Post-secondary institutions offer a variety of services and supports, from note-takers and other accommodation measures to funding grants and bursaries, to assist students with disabilities. However, more and better

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[10] For more information, see *Transitional Vocational Program*. Retrieved from http://www.employment.alberta.ca/AWonline/ETS/4366.html. Some TVP programs are residential in the sense that students live in college dorms while participating.

coordination between employment and training programs is reportedly required to achieve greater employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

In addition to its post-secondary education that would be accessed by people with disabilities in the same way as anyone else, Quebec's Training Measure is for short-term training that targets people at risk of long-term unemployment. The training is free and reportedly aims to meet "real needs" in the labour market. It is for people on social assistance, unemployed people and people at risk of losing their job, e.g., because of job redundancy. In addition, the law creates an obligation for enterprises to reserve 1% of their revenue for training. If they fail to do so they must put the funds in a dedicated fund for people who are already working. The fund is administered by the Labour Market Commission. About ten projects this past year targeted employment training for people with disabilities using these funds. One project conducted a census of the needs of people with disabilities. Identification of the need for literacy training was one outcome. Another project recognized the skills and competencies of people in a cleaning department and granted certificates that recognized the individuals' competencies. Another project targeted high school students with a hearing disability and trained them as machinery operators.

New Brunswick's colleges will reportedly adapt their curricula to meet the needs of people with disabilities. For those who are unable to complete all the requirements of a diploma or certificate program, the colleges will certify students for the program components that they *have* completed.

In Prince Edward Island non-profit organizations in the disability sector are involved with a Human Resource Advisory Committee which advises on college curriculum and instruction.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the importance enabling people with disabilities to participate in post-secondary education is recognized. Last year, of 93 people who completed programming funded by Human Resources, Labour and Employment, only nine are receiving income support. However, the challenge of enabling such participation in post-secondary programming is, in the words of an interview respondent, "a big challenge. There's significant demand for this and wait lists." That said, representatives from disability organizations are on an Advisory Committee on Learners with Disabilities for the Colleges of the North Atlantic and there is a similar committee with people with disabilities at Memorial University.

Yukon Learn is a society that provides free adult literacy and numeracy services throughout the territory, including to first nations and remote communities such as Burwash and Dawson. Most literacy and numeracy training in the Northwest Territories is provided through colleges and some private organizations. In Nunavut, much of the training that is required, e.g., for heavy machine operations, is taken in Ontario. Most

training in Nunavut is taken at Northern College and its satellites. Popular programs are math, English, Early Childhood Education and teacher education. Students would apply to college for courses then approach Income Support for a training allowance, a responsibility that is shared by Asset Groups for Nunavut land claims to make the funding go further. Financial literacy, general literacy and adult basic education (ABE) are reportedly "huge needs" in Nunavut. While there is no longer funding for ABE, pre-employment programs typically have ABE components.

Employer Awareness Raising

Several initiatives have been developed to help raise employer awareness about the hiring and retention of people with disabilities. A reportedly successful initiative has been British Columbia's 10 by 10 Challenge, which has been an overarching disability strategy for that province. The program issued a call to employers and communities to address people with disabilities' low rate of employment. Drawing from PALS data, the aim was to increase the number employed by 10% or 13,000 people by 2010. The government reportedly received 'good recognition' for the initiative. The program worked effectively because communities registered to participate in the challenge and employers 'jumped on board'. Success stories were broadcasted on community websites. The initiative was low cost because it involved tapping into already existing employment resources; government provided matching funds. A tool kit was developed to assist employers and there has been employer-to-employer selling of the idea. Government reportedly received "good feedback" from non-government organizations and communities, who were able to support employers and leverage funding from the Vancouver Foundation's Disability Supports for Employment Fund. Another initiative in BC, Workable Solutions, is a website that connects employers and job-seekers with disabilities. It also provides employers with a business case and practical resources on the hiring and retention of people with disabilities. The program is reportedly 'very popular' yet does not incur major government costs.

A reportedly effective project in Calgary is funded under the Employment Innovation Project for Persons with Disabilities, a Government of Alberta cross-ministry initiative to support new and innovative approaches to meet the needs of Albertans with disabilities. The provider is a local non-profit organization that was established in 2008. The aims are to: change attitudes and build capacity in the business community to attract and retain people with disabilities; address job retention of persons with disabilities by providing information, linkages and support to employers; and increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The initiative has focused on working with employers to change their attitudes towards hiring people with disabilities and has made available the services employers need in order to hire people with disabilities. The initiative has convened employer-to-employer gatherings and mutual support where testimonials about 'success stories' are shared. Employer focus groups are used to determine the needs of the employers and information sessions are based on

these identified needs. There is also employer-to-employer problem solving with contractor supports for this. For example, an employer identified an individual who needed a specific support-on-the job and the contractor knew where it was available and how to arrange it. This approach appears to be more effective in engaging employers than a similar initiative in which employers have also been involved but in which community agencies became a dominant presence instead of being available 'in the background' to provide support to employers as required. That said, success stories are profiled in that initiative, too, as is information about supports available to employers.

In Saskatchewan employer-to-employer networking and awareness raising can happen through local chambers of commerce and business organizations. Local communities have Supported Employment Month and distribute employer awards. These locally driven events are often led by non-profit organizations. Supported Employment Month was provincial in scope in March of 2011. The Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres coordinated the event, ran radio ads, TV spots and distributed employer awards.

In Ontario, the Don't Waste Talent campaign was launched in 2010 to raise awareness with employers about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities, to provide information on making the workplace more inclusive and to link employers with community service providers. Employment agencies are also engaged in outreach to employers, seeking to place individuals who have the required job skills. Employers are being persuaded to hire people with disabilities at a mix of fairs and other initiatives as well. For instance, funding was provided to Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters for Business Takes Action (BTA). Created in 2007, BTA showcases the benefits of hiring and retaining candidates with disabilities. It promotes employment inclusivity to small and medium-sized businesses, provides workshops, networking opportunities and guide books to members in all sectors and, through the provision of human resources materials and complimentary services, aims to serve as a one-stop forum for small to medium-sized businesses on employing people with disabilities. It has placed a focus on mental health issues in the workplace, while raising awareness about other issues of disability in employment as well.[11]

In Quebec, raising employer awareness and building a business case for hiring people with disabilities and similar activities are "not a big problem" because employers of large operations that do not require highly skilled workers are always looking for people to hire, such as grocery stores, restaurants and hardware stores. Employers in job sectors that require higher skilled workers, however, require more convincing.

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[11] For more information see, About BTA. Retrieved from http://www.businesstakesaction.ca/en/about-bta/about-bta.html.

It was reported that one of the most important activities on Prince Edward Island to further the employment of people with disabilities is the work being done by the Community Services, Seniors and Labour and by community organizations to actively promote their clients to employers for hiring.

Organizational Networking

A general impression drawn from the interviews is that organizations that are providing effective disability-related employment services are networking amongst themselves, with employers and employer organizations and in partnership with governments. Organizations for networking agencies include, for example, the affiliate branches of the Canadian Association for Supported Employment, the Ontario Disability Employment Network and the New Brunswick Disability Executive Network (NBDEN).

In some cases governments convene networking opportunities for such agencies. For instance Saskatchewan's Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration Regional Directors in five regions convene meetings with non-profit organizations to explore common problems and promising practices. Provincial disability organizations with local branches work together at these regional meetings. Government representatives are often at the table at NBDEN meetings.

Summary

This research has provided an overview of the low levels of employment of people with disabilities and some of the key general socio-demographic and disability-specific factors that help account for this problem. It provides a discussion of approaches to thinking about 'best' and 'effective' practices in furthering the employment of people with disabilities and concludes that, as yet, consensus is lacking.

To the extent that programs are furthering the employment of people with disabilities in regular jobs in the open labour force, however, key findings from the review of the literature and interviews with provincial and territorial officials are that staff expertise and belief in the strengths and capabilities of people with disabilities are important enablers. Other important enablers are measures to strengthen the self-confidence of people with disabilities, individualized and holistic counselling practices, opportunities and supports for people with disabilities to participate in post-secondary education and training and steps to ensure a good fit between the strengths and interests of individuals and employment opportunities. For some individuals the latter entails self-employment and work in social enterprises. In order to overcome barriers to participation at work, ongoing supports may be needed by individuals for disability-specific needs.

Both individuals with disabilities and employers may need ongoing follow-up problem-solving support to help deal with difficulties that may arise. Some individuals will benefit by interventions that address factors that exacerbate their disability and render their jobs at risk. Others will benefit by interventions that address late onset disability and the risk of job loss. Awareness-raising among employers about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities occurs in many jurisdictions. Organizational networking among employment agencies and collaboration with other stakeholders is a hallmark of initiatives that seem to be resulting in people with disabilities getting and keeping jobs and in leveraging additional resources than what are available from governments to further that objective.

A persisting challenge is for governments to develop indicators and measures of the sometimes complex mix of interventions required to move people with significant barriers to employment along a continuum that may begin with little or no attachment to the labour force to working at one or more jobs that are consistent with their long-range career goals.

Future Directions

In terms of future directions for employment-related programming for people with disabilities, it makes sense for governments to place a significant focus on ensuring that people with disabilities have access to post-secondary education and training, and that they have the supports needed to succeed, there. It also makes sense to ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunities and supports needed to make the transition to paid employment and to remain engaged in it. Educational programming with a practical, employment-focused dimension may be especially helpful for some individuals. People with complex needs and/or multiple employment barriers will require particular attention from a system that would ideally be individualized, client focused and well-coordinated for all.

The importance of education is not to be understated: as the education level of people with disabilities increases so does the likelihood of their securing employment (Crawford, 2004 and 2007; HRSDC, 2010b). Although the educational attainment levels of people with disabilities have been improving, there is still a gap between their educational attainment that of their counterparts without disabilities (Crawford, 2004 and 2007; Ontario, 2010). Inadequate work-related training is one of the key barriers that people with disabilities who are outside of the labour force say prevents them from looking for jobs (Statistics Canada, 2008b).

Ensuring people have the supports people with disabilities require for education, training and work also makes sense. Where people with disabilities have reasonably good education, do not have unmet needs for human support with daily activities or aids/devices to assist with activities such as communication or mobility, and where they do not have difficulties with local transportation, their employment level is similar to that of people without disabilities. It is true that people with a severe level of disability are less likely to have employment even where these conditions are met. But where people with disabilities have difficulties in all these areas, their employment prospects are very poor irrespective of the nature or severity of their disability (Crawford, 2004 and 2007).

A challenge, then, is to devise an employment 'system' that can help people with disabilities gain access to and coordinate what for some individuals may be a complex 'package' of supports (OECD, 2010) and ensure those supports are in place to further their retention in employment. Similarly, ensuring employers know they will have the 'hassle free' follow-up support they may require over the long-term would help allay concerns they may have about hiring people with disabilities today.

Arguably it would be reasonable to place a significant focus on youth with disabilities, which would also be consistent with one of the policy and program priorities

of the disability community (Council of Canadians with Disabilities, 2011). It is more common for young people with disabilities now than in previous generations to have experienced schooling alongside their non-disabled peers. Encouraging and assisting young people with disabilities to envision a future in which they are productive employees in the regular labour force would help set the stage for adulthood in which they actively pursue that vision. Systemic efforts to help them realize the vision, together with the documentation and sharing of what youth, families, employers, service providers, governments and other stakeholders learn about what works well, could help subsequent generations of young people to follow successfully in their steps.

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Appendix 1 – Policy Context for Addressing the Low Employment of People with Disabilities

For Canadians in general, the major system for furthering employment and addressing issues of unemployment, including the need for work-related training and experience, consists of the 'active measures' under Part II of the *Employment Insurance Act* (*EI Act*). The *EI Act* authorizes the Canada Employment Insurance Commission to enter into agreements with provinces to determine how active measures are to be implemented and evaluated (s. 57.(2) – (3)) and requires the Commission, on behalf of the Government of Canada, to invite provinces to enter into agreements to further those ends.

Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs) are the bilateral federal-provincial/territorial agreements that have been reached between the federal and all provincial/territorial governments for operationalizing Employment Benefits and Support Measures (EBSMs), which are the active measures per Part II of the *EI Act.*

EBSMs are conceptually and operationally divisible into employment benefits (EBs), which target individuals who are 'insured persons' within the meaning of the *EI Act*, and support measures (SMs), which target employers, organizations and communities seeking to improve the employment prospects of insured persons. People with disabilities may qualify to receive such programming.

Beyond the EI regime, other employment-related programming that is specifically for people with disabilities includes measures under the Multi-Lateral Framework for Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities (LMAPD). These arrangements allow for federal cost-sharing of provincial employment programming for persons with disabilities (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada [HRSDC], 2011a).[12] One of the priorities of the initiative is to improve the level of basic and post-secondary education and work-related skills for persons with disabilities. Kinds of measures funded under this initiative have included:

- employment counselling and assessment;
- pre-employment training, skills development;
- post-secondary education support;
- school to work transitions;
- ongoing active employment support;
- assistive aids and devices;
- individualized funding, wage subsidies and earnings supplements;

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[12] At present the northern territories do not have LMAPDs.

- supported employment;
- vocational crisis interventions; and
- self-employment.

A fairly detailed list of employment-related measures that are eligible for funding under LMAPDs is available at http://www.socialunion.gc.ca/pwd/appendix.html.

The Opportunities Fund allows for federal funding of employment projects run by non-government organizations that target people with disabilities who do not qualify for EI-based programming or similar provincial or territorial programs (HRSDC, 2011b). The objective the Opportunities Fund is to assist persons with disabilities in preparing for, obtaining and keeping employment or becoming self-employed, thereby increasing their economic participation and independence.

The broad vision statement, *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues*, is to be guiding both federal and provincial governments with respect to policy and programming for persons with disabilities (Federal/ Provincial/ Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services, 1997). The result of the inter-governmental Ministerial Council on Social Policy Reform and Renewal's (1996) prioritization of disability issues for policy attention, *In Unison* sets the full citizenship, equality and inclusion of people with disabilities as end goals to be realized by means of, among other things, more flexible and responsive policy and program measures in the area of employment.

'Labour Market Agreements', which beginning in 2008 have been signed between the federal government and all provinces and territories, set a framework for the expenditure of federal and provincial investments in labour market programming that is to address the needs of people who are typically under-represented in the labour force, including Aboriginal people, immigrants and persons with disabilities, and who do not qualify for EI (HRSDC, 2011c).

Appendix 2 – Key Elements of Programs where Effectively Furthering the Employment and Employability of People with Disabilities

Main characteristics of people served
A. Type of disability
Multi/cross/any disability
Specialized focus:
Seeing
Hearing
Speaking
Mobility/agility
Learning Disabilities
Intellectual/developmental disability
Psychiatric / psychological / emotional disability
Addictions
Other (please specify)
B. Other characteristics of people served
Aboriginal persons
Visible minorities
Women
Youth
Residents of rural community
Residents of urban community
Other (please specify)
Conducts awareness raising
A. About services provided
For the community in general
For employers
For individuals with disabilities
B. About benefits of hiring/retaining people with disabilities ('business case')
For the community in general
For employers
C. About 'success stories'
For the community in general
For employers
For potential clients with disabilities

Receives referrals
By self-referral
From rehab, health and other professionals
From family
From employers
From educators/trainers
From others (please specify)

Assessment (conducts)
A. Psychological / psychometric
B. Of individual interests, strengths & needs concerning
Employment
Education/training
Use of technologies for employment or education

Individualized planning (assists with):
For employment
For studies/training
For use of technologies for employment or education

Training/education
A. Directly provides:
Pre-employment skills development
Life skills
Self-confidence building
Resume writing
Job search assistance
Literacy/numeracy training
Work experience
Basic computer skills
Work-related task training (job skills)
B. Facilitates access to:
Pre-employment skills development
Life skills
Self-confidence building
Resume writing
Job search assistance
Literacy/numeracy training
Work experience
Basic computer skills
Employment-specific skills development (job skills)
On-the-job training
Formal/classroom-based training

Employment
Facilitates access to employment opportunities with:
Employers
Self-employment
Community economic development
Social enterprise
Disability supports for individuals
A. Direct provision of supports at/for work
Human
Aids/devices
Ergonomics
Transportation
Other (please specify)
B. Direct provision of supports at/for education/training
Human
Aids/devices
Ergonomics
Transportation
Other (please specify)
C. Facilitates access to supports at/for work
Modified procedures/routines
Human
Aids/devices
Ergonomics
Transportation
Other (please specify)
D. Facilitates access to supports at/for education/training
Modified procedures/routines
Human
Aids/devices
Ergonomics
Transportation
Other (please specify)
Service coordination (serves as hub or focal point for)
Employment
Education/training
Disability supports
Progress monitoring and plan adjustment
For individuals in education/training
For individuals at work

Post-placement follow-up support
For individuals with disabilities in education/training
For individuals with disabilities at work
For educators/trainers
For employers
Technical assistance for stakeholders
A. For employers
How to accommodate
Where/how to obtain goods/services required for accommodation
B. For educators/trainers
How to accommodate
Where/how to obtain goods/ services required for accommodation
Networking
With employers
With governments
With employment agencies
With organizations of people with disabilities
With rehab and health professionals
With high schools
With colleges
With universities
With others (please specify)
Peer support / mentoring
Arranges / hosts this
Other service characteristics
Well qualified / knowledgeable staff
Physically accessible premises
Accessible web portal
Provides childcare for clients' planning, work or education/training
Individualized client focus